



What is *pandemic influenza (pandemic flu)*?

- ▶ Influenza is an illness from a virus that causes fever, coughing, muscle aches, and other symptoms that we refer to as the “flu.”
- ▶ A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus spreads to people all over the world.
- ▶ Pandemic flu is not the same as seasonal flu. Illness from seasonal flu occurs every year, usually in winter months. Getting vaccinated (flu shot or nasal spray) can protect you from seasonal flu.
- ▶ Pandemic flu might make you sicker than seasonal flu. It may also spread more easily and quickly from person to person. A vaccine for pandemic flu may not be ready at the start of a pandemic. With pandemic flu:
 - People will have little or no immunity;
 - Symptoms and complications may be more severe than with seasonal flu;
 - The death rate may be higher;
 - There may be a major impact on our society.

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Outbreaks occur each year, often in fall and winter.	Does not happen often—only three times in the 20th century.
Seasonal flu virus is similar to flu viruses of past years.	Because the virus is new, many more people are likely to get sick.
200,000 people get sick each year in the U.S. (and 36,000 die) but there is usually space in hospitals for those who are really sick.	So many people will get sick that hospitals may not be able to handle all of the people who need care.
The very young, the elderly, and people with chronic health problems are most likely to get very sick.	People of any age and even healthy people could get very sick.
A vaccine given by shot or nasal spray is made each year that usually works well to slow or reduce the spread of seasonal flu.	A vaccine for pandemic flu may not be available when pandemic flu first breaks out. It may take six months to make the first doses of the pandemic flu-specific vaccine.

Pandemic Flu:

A VA Pocket Guide

SafeGuarding
and Serving

Department of
Veterans Affairs



VA Prepares for Pandemic Flu

What if I get sick?

TREATING THE FLU AT HOME

Treat the flu at home with rest, fluids, and fever reducing medications per label or provider instructions. Call your health care provider if you have a fever of at least 100.4°F (38°C) for more than 3-5 days or if you feel better, then your fever returns. Go right away for medical care if you have shortness of breath, chest pain, cough up blood, or if you cannot function normally.

WHEN TO RETURN TO WORK OR SCHOOL

Even if you are feeling better, stay home and away from others for five days or more after you get sick, and at least 48 hours after your fever has ended. After you return to work or school, take measures to protect yourself and others. Return home and contact your health care provider if your fever returns, your cough worsens, your breathing is not normal, or if you have other symptoms that worry you.

Stopping the Spread of Flu Viruses

It will be critical to limit the spread of flu viruses during a pandemic. The flu is spread through coughs and sneezes, and hands that are not cleaned. Taking these steps can keep you and others healthy.



STAY HOME WHEN SICK*

This is important to do so you keep from spreading flu viruses to other people. You can spread the flu from

about one day before symptoms start to five days or more after they are present. So stay home from work and school when you are sick.



KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Avoiding large crowds, public gatherings, or unnecessary contact with others will help to keep the spread of flu viruses

under control. Have children limit their contact with others. At work, limit in-person meetings and gatherings by using telework and other strategies as needed.



USE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

During a pandemic both patients and staff may be asked to wear masks.

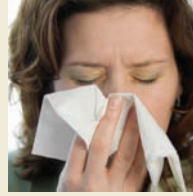
Patients might be asked to wear masks to prevent spreading the virus. Health care workers might be asked to wear respirators and other equipment to protect themselves from being exposed to the flu virus.



CLEAN YOUR HANDS

Keep hands clean to avoid spreading flu viruses. Wash with soap and water before preparing or eating

food; after using the bathroom or changing a diaper; when caring for someone who is sick; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; after handling trash and other objects; and after treating a wound.



COVER YOUR COUGHS AND SNEEZES

This is always important, but especially so during pandemic flu. Use clean tissues to cover all coughs and sneezes, and put your

used tissue into a wastebasket. Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol hand rub. When you don't have a tissue available, cough or sneeze into your upper arm sleeve.



STAY HEALTHY

Take good care of yourself to minimize the impact of pandemic flu. Eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, get a flu shot every

year, and practice good hygiene including regular hand washing. These practices can help you remain healthy so your body can be strong.

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Infection: Don't Pass It On Campaign

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NAME

1918



Spanish Flu
Killed 50 million or more worldwide and 675,000 in the U.S.

1957



Asian Flu
Killed 1-2 million worldwide and almost 70,000 in the U.S.

1968



Hong Kong Flu
Killed 700,000 worldwide and 33,800 in the U.S.

20??



Next pandemic
Could kill 90,000 to 1.8 million people in the U.S. alone.

<http://www.pandemicflu.va.gov>



STEPS TO TAKE to prepare for pandemic flu

✓ **STOCK UP** Store a two-week supply of food and water including nonperishable, ready-to-eat foods, plus one gallon of water per person per day. Don't forget pets. Stockpile money in small bills, as using credit cards may not be possible.

✓ **CHECK MEDICATIONS** Have at least two weeks of medications and other supplies on hand. Renew prescriptions if necessary.

✓ **GET HEALTH CARE SUPPLIES** Things to have on hand at home include a thermometer, fever reducers, alcohol-based hand cleaners or soaps, blankets, tissues, disinfectants, facemasks, and disposable gloves.

✓ **COMMUNICATE EMERGENCY PLANS** Talk to family members about pandemic flu plans, how to care for someone who is sick, and how to control the spread of flu viruses.

✓ **PREPARE TO WORK FROM HOME** Talk to your employer about the potential of working from home during pandemic flu. Prepare a workspace with supplies and equipment.

✓ **KNOW SCHOOL PLANS** Find out about school emergency plans and consider preparing home learning activities for children. Also know plans for elderly care and day care providers.

✓ **INCLUDE NEIGHBORS IN YOUR PLAN** Identify those in your neighborhood who may need special help, such as the elderly, people who live alone, and those with disabilities. Share your emergency contact information with others.

✓ **GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY** Contact your public health department, neighborhood association, or faith-based organization to help plan and prepare for pandemic flu in your community.

✓ **PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE** Make hand washing a routine habit for you and your family. Teach all family members to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and to dispose of used tissues properly.

✓ **STAY AWAY FROM OTHERS WHEN SICK** Stay home from work or school if sick. Keep distance from family members when feasible.

ITEMS TO HAVE ON HAND

FOOD, FLUIDS, AND NON-PERISHABLES

- ☐ Ready-to-eat canned meats and fish
- ☐ Canned fruits, vegetables, and soups
- ☐ Protein or fruit bars
- ☐ Dry cereal and granola
- ☐ Peanut butter and nuts
- ☐ Dried fruit
- ☐ Crackers
- ☐ Canned juices
- ☐ Bottled water
- ☐ Baby food and formula
- ☐ Pet food
- ☐ Other nonperishable foods

HEALTH AND EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

- ☐ Prescribed medical devices such as glucose and blood-pressure monitors
- ☐ Soap, cleansing agents, and alcohol-based hand wash
- ☐ Medicines for fever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen
- ☐ Thermometer
- ☐ Anti-diarrhea medication
- ☐ Face masks and disposable gloves
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Sports drinks
- ☐ Flashlights
- ☐ Batteries
- ☐ Portable radio
- ☐ Manual can opener
- ☐ Disposable diapers and feminine-hygiene products
- ☐ Tissues, toilet paper, and paper towels
- ☐ Garbage bags
- ☐ Diluted bleach or antiseptic wipes to clean common living areas
- ☐ Safety candles and matches



PLANNING INFORMATION: Family Emergency Health History

FAMILY MEMBER	BLOOD TYPE	ALLERGIES	MEDICAL CONDITIONS	CURRENT MEDICATION/DOSES

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Personal Emergency Contact	Phone
Preferred Hospital	Phone
Family Physician(s)	Phone
State Public Health Department (http://www.pandemicflu.gov/state/state_contacts.html)	Phone
Work Contact	Phone
Pharmacy	Phone
Employer	Phone
School	Phone
Veterinarian	Phone
Religious or Spiritual Contact	Phone

VA prepares for pandemic flu

It is important to have a plan in place to combat pandemic flu and its effects, so there are several activities underway at VA that will help the Department get ready. These include:

1. National, State, and local collaboration of efforts
2. *VA Pandemic Influenza Plan*
3. Emergency and antiviral stockpiles
4. Ethical guidance
5. Practical exercises
6. Data and communications systems
7. Educational campaigns and activities